

Town of Fairhaven
Cable Advisory Committee
September 15, 2020 – 7:00p.m.

1. Quorum/Attendance:

Present: Chairperson Barbara Acksen, MJ Carvalho, John Methia and Ronnie Medina

Absent: Selectman Keith Silvia.

Cable Director, Derek Frates was also in attendance.

2. Minutes from previous meeting: The Committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting which took place in February. After review a motion was made by MJ Carvalho to accept the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ronnie Medina. Motion was passed unanimously.

3. Cable Director's Report: Chairperson Acksen explained that the Committee did not meet for the past few months because of the pandemic Covid 19, exacerbated by the fact that Cable Director Frates has been over worked with the responsibilities of the remote logistics of the various town meetings. John Methia complemented Mr. Frates and his team for the loyalty and diligence in providing the necessary support for the meetings being held mostly through Zoom since the pandemic broke last March. Mr. Frates praised the Production Coordinator, Eric Sa, for the outstanding job during Town Meetings. He also gave a quick explanation as to the most hybrid system of meetings, where some folks attend personally from Town Hall, while others connect through Zoom. Mr. Frates stated that the so-called hybrid method may allow more people to attend meetings in the long run.

In 2019 234 government meetings, 41 PSA's were covered by Cable Access. For Channel 18, the six-month report, January through June, discloses that 126 meetings were covered by his department, 12 PSA's 220.5 original programming hours. He commented that people are more interested than before in the meetings and even the Facebook followers numbers has increased.

The Channel 95 report shows that audience took a bit of a dip, as Town Hall was closed, however, the viewership has increased and there are a few new shows, including importing new shows from other communities, such as a production from the YMCA, exercise and cooking segments, Covid-related shows that other communities produced. Any thing that we produce on Public Access, I put on Mass Access, Televue, which is nationwide. 83 new stations have downloaded shows produced by Fairhaven Cable Access. Fairhaven Community Nurses are starting a new series of Public Access shows, which will be very helpful to the community. Also Council on Aging is interested in participating.

As for the monthly report, 22 meetings, 1 PSA, for a total of 37 hours of original programming produced/covered by the Cable dept. Another example of high quality locally produced program is "Pirates and Privateers" with Chris Richards. Chairperson Acksen commented on a possible outlet to recognize non-profit organizations.

Mr. Frates gave a quick tutorial of how to find the various committee meetings on the Town website under "Community Videos". As an example of good programs, a new series "The Magazine" with Charles Murphy, as host, Mr. Frates praised the quality of the content. The PSA for the BMX track was produced as a way of advertising as it was closed for a while during the first months of the pandemic.

The 4th of July celebration was another program which was very well accepted by the community, per Mr. Frates during his report. The walking tours were not possible this year, so a virtual tour was filmed of the Henry H. Rogers was done. The parade for the graduation was filmed and was another success according to the various comments received. The videographers are slowly being called back with serious thought for the budget, which is something that is first and foremost on Mr. Frates' consideration.

The long-promised switch to fiber finally took place for all of the channels, still on standard definition, as called by the contract—no HD—but, several comments were received that it looks pretty good.

The subject of the Halloween celebration was discussed, as it has been such a huge success for the last few years. Chairperson Acksen commented on the importance of the holiday and the probability of the pandemic sticking around for the next few months. The suggestion was made by Ms. Acksen that maybe some organizations would like to assist in putting on a show before the cameras for the occasion. John Methia suggested a haunted drive-in type of event with a couple of movies where folks could still get dressed with the kids, but staying in their cars and possibly get some video that way. The audio could be set up on a Wi-Fi Bluetooth, or a transmission through and AM radio. Discussion continued with the suggestion of a virtual Halloween Costume Contest.

Mention was made that the Fairhaven IT Dept. has been of great assistance for Town Meeting, with the next coming up on October 20th.

4. Broadband Study Committee:

Mr. Frates stated that there is not at the present a current member from the Cable Advisory Committee on the Broadband Study Committee. And there have been some other changes on that committee. The group from EntryPoint ended up winning the bid. A new website has been created and a link can be found in our homepage with a simple explanation and a survey. According to Mr. Frates only about 100 people have taken the survey, and a better count of the Town must be had in order to assess the feasibility of the project. Discussion was had about the necessity for informing the public to take part in the survey, including some Facebook postings to capture the public's attention to the Broadband Study. A report will be released to the Select Board soon. Ronnie Medina inquired if there is a need for another member of the Cable Advisory Board, and Mr. Frates promised to inquire and get back to him.

5. Impact of COVID-19 on programming and Project Development:

Ms. Acksen reminded those presents that the current budget goes up to October and next year's budget is still unknown, including any shortfalls from the State. Mr. Frates added that he had requested an increase for the videographers' budget as the previous year's budget went above what was allocated. John Methia suggested that there may be funds available because of the COVID-19 to support programs as Cable Access programming is a necessary tool for the community.

Discussion was had as to the possibility of mental professionals and other supportive groups to record PSA's during this difficult time of the pandemic. Many non-profit groups could be of great assistance in producing community supportive programs with focus on the elderly, housing issues, domestic violence, health issues, etc., especially during COVID.

Chairperson Acksen asked Mr. Frates about training. He shared that a group came in, but did not follow up. As previously stated, the Fairhaven Community Nurses were starting to shoot programming and

then the pandemic hit, but they are going to get focused on that project. But the training is a must, although Mr. Frates and the staff are available and willing to assist.

6. Policy and Procedures:

Ms. Acksen asked Mr. Frates about any special procedures under COVID. As you can see from the signs at Town Hall, now that the building is open, it's basically business only—you cannot loiter around in the building. A mask has to be used, but when we are on-camera we need to be socially distanced on the set, so for any show, and on-camera, they can take the mask off. If someone needs to do something in the evening at the Cable office, arrangements need to be made, but we are very flexible with our hours. MJ Carvalho noted that recently Dr. Fauci, the authority on the pandemic stated recently that COVID-19 stretch into 2021. Everybody seems to be more than tired of the situation the world finds itself in. As the schools are just about to start, the situation may be different, considering the large college campuses. Mr. Frates commented on the large preparation Zoom meetings that took place in connection with the Fairhaven schools scheduled opening.

8. Budget Developing:

Mr. Frates reported that there isn't much that can be done until October's Town Meeting. Comcast was coming out this week to hopefully correct the last hiccup in the Town wide fiber output. He said it was an internal issue that was hopefully going to get fixed.

9. Selectman Keith Silvia:

Chairperson Acksen announced that Selectman Rob Espindola notified her that there was a reconfiguration of which selectman would be part of which committee, and Mr. Espindola will no longer be assigned to this committee. The position was assigned to Selectman Keith Silvia.

10. Other business:

It was agreed that serious thought will be given to Halloween and everyone in the committee will be advised as to next month's meeting and any activities planned. Ms. Acksen announced that Michael Merolla is no longer part of the Committee. The Chairperson put out an invitation to anyone in the community interested in programming should contact and join the committee. John Methia added that anyone that produces shows can reciprocate a bit and sit in our committee with the perspective of someone who is using the channel.

John Methia extended a word of thanks to Bob Espindola for his work in the committee along the years. Chairperson Acksen praised Mr. Espindola for his dedication to this board.

MJ Carvalho made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ron Medina. The motion passed unanimously at 7:54pm.

Respectively,
MJ Carvalho

MJ Carvalho
Acting Recording Secretary